MDS 601

Our Purpose

The Chuck Norris System™ (CNS) is a Korean-based American hard style of karate. The style was founded by Mr. Chuck Norris, and was originally based on Mr. Norris' *Tang Soo Do* training in Korea while serving in the military. During his unprecedented competitive fighting career (undefeated world middleweight karate champion six years running), Mr. Norris began to evolve the style to make it more effective and complete. He did this through committed study of other systems which he felt would complement his Tang Soo Do foundation. This evolution, along with his personal commitment to excellence, resulted in his phenomenal success. This openness continues today, as The Chuck Norris System continues to evolve to include aspects of other systems, or completely original aspects which make it more complete.

CNS is not an *ad hoc* collection of various techniques from different systems. Rather, it is a system with a deeply rooted traditional foundation of its own - now unique and different from its Tang Soo Do predecessor - to which various other elements that complement its fundamentals have been added. CNS has come to emphasize self defense, competition, weapons, grappling, fitness, and more.

With everything that CNS includes, *or that it may come to include*, you might wonder how in the world you will keep up with and retain all this information, let alone apply it in your personal practice, as well as in teaching? This is why we come together in Master Development Series™ (MDS) training - to help each other better understand and keep pace with our living, breathing martial arts ssystem.

The MDS faculty will make every effort to make the material clear and useful to you. You will hear, see, and feel the concepts being taught. Some of it will be review. Some of it will be completely new. Be open to all of it. We need absolutes in our common vocabulary so that we are all on the same page - common ground, as it were, with our communication. We need to describe the same things in the same way from instructor to instructor (*intra*-school), from school to school (*inter*-school or *intra*-region), from region to region (*inter*-region), and across the entire organization. Whether the language is English or Spanish, Norwegian or Italian, UFAF must solidify the identity of The Chuck Norris System across UFAF, as well as our teaching and training standards and practices. From our common foundation of core skills, we can then be truly free to innovate in the spirit of our founder.

When you teach, you probably use questions to help your students retain the information you are presenting. To assist you in retaining the information presented in Course 601, you might benefit from turning some questions on yourself over the course of the MDS event:

- How did that feel?
- Can you tell me what you saw?
- How did that impact you?
- What did you learn from this?
- What is your understanding now, compared to before?
- How did this empower you?
- What is one new thing you learned today?
- Do you feel you are better at something after today's class?

Our first goal for the MDS is not only to *experience* the presented material, but to literally *own* it - that is, to make it our own. This won't happen at a single MDS event, of course. But by asking and answering these kinds of questions, we will be able to retain it better and longer. If we truly bring a beginner's mind to each training, and a *commitment to retain, train, and master the material* even (perhaps especially) after we leave, we will eventually "own" it. It will be ours. This needs to be our goal - individually and collectively (together with all our UFAF brothers and sisters).

Our second goal for the MDS is to increasingly see this material being taught and tested through the student and black belt ranks, thus helping all our members to own it for themselves.

Together, through our own practice and through our teaching, we can preserve a legacy for Mr. Norris, in the form of the system he created. A system in which we have invested sweat, blood, tears, time, and resources to learn and make part of us, and which can bless the lives of so many yet future students and black belts.

As we teach, we need to address the *what*, the *why*, and the *how* of our subject. This creates value in students' minds for what we are teaching. Often instructors will say, "OK, today we're going to learn round kicks," and then they immediately launch into *how* to do it. But without some *what* and *why*, students will have little understanding upon which to build their learning and practice. As a result, they may automatically adopt a path of least resistance, where attention to principles and detail is not valued or viewed as important. This isn't their fault, it's the instruction they received. Our goal here is to provide some of the what, why, and how on a few issues relevant to CNS (and to the *teaching* of CNS) with the intent that it will directly benefit you, and through you, your students.

There have been periods in UFAF's past when CNS's stylistic identity was somewhat ambiguous. Not everyone agreed on the interpretation of the style and its techniques. For this reason, some MDS attendees may find that some of the material presented here conflicts with longstanding local practices and habits. Our goal here is to come together, and to bring the core of our system

together to solidify its identity, to ensure its longevity, and to strengthen the legacy of this, Mr. Norris' creation, in martial arts history.

How then (when we are faced with information that may be new to us) do we change 5, 10, 15, 20+ years of habit? One way is to train ourselves and our students to be listeners, to be students, to anticipate and embrace any and all opportunities to expand our horizons - be it through being reminded of our roots, or adapting to new innovations. Both tradition and innovation are at the heart of The Chuck Norris System.

Has a student ever asked you, "Why are you changing my karate again?" We've all heard it at our schools, and we hear it at the MDS, too! Here are some answers that might be handy for you, depending on the question:

- We're changing it because I (your instructor) have just *learned something new, better, or more complete*, and I'm sharing it with you
- We're changing it because CNS is always adapting to *new needs*
- We're not changing it, we're *reminding* you of how it's always been
- We're not changing it, we're adding to it by *addressing additional purposes and situations*
- Instead of thinking in terms of "changing" something, think in terms of *opportunity* to learn and do something new, or something old at a higher level than before, of *becoming and remaining a student*
- CNS is a constantly evolving art. We're doing something new *because there <u>is</u> something new!*

When an instructor stops learning, he stops teaching. Part of teaching is to understand learning. If someone receives a black belt and then stops seeking new knowledge and instruction, he stops learning how to apply what he knows, and becomes limited in his application knowledge and teaching ability. No sooner does someone set himself up as the fountain of all martial arts knowledge, than s/he is passed like s/he is standing still by others who have retained their hunger for learning, and who continually adapt their abilities to new and better information.

History

If we don't occasionally stop and consider where we are with our technique, and measure our execution and progress against a known standard, we will find that our technique, even though practiced diligently, may gradually deteriorate or "drift" away from center without our even knowing it. It is human nature. Sometimes entire techniques - their purpose, execution, and philosophy - are collectively forgotten from martial arts systems because practitioners have neglected to measure progress, development, or periodically compare to a standard. This phenomenon has certainly played into UFAF's history. During certain periods of UFAF's history, there were few consistent standards. Members were largely left to their own devices to maintain quality and a sense of identity with Mr. Norris' system. There was very little help or networking available. In this modern age of CNS, we have the advantage of increased networking, communication, organization, and resources to help each other learn, teach, and stay on target with our stylistic identity. The purpose of the MDS is to remind us of our roots, our core, and our technical and philosophical standards. And to pave the way for the innovation that continues to evolve CNS in today's martial arts landscape.

Not only is it important to understand the identity of our own system, but as master instructors it is also useful to know how it fits into the overall DNA of martial arts. Because it does. Master instructors understand their own roots, and how they connect to the overall martial arts world, in order to understand themselves and their own style better.

There are many training directions one can choose to pursue in today's martial arts world. Some are cool and flashy, although perhaps not very realistic for fighting or self-defense. Some are ultra-realistic, but not to everyone's liking. And there are many, many others between these extremes. Every one of them has its place and can contribute something of value to a martial artist's skill, fulfillment, and enjoyment of the arts. As UFAF members pursue these many different directions, The Chuck Norris System will be enriched by the skills they learn. As we do so, let us take care to keep sight of our core skills, their history, and our stylistic identity - the underlying principles and philosophies that our technique is based on. Without these skills and principles in mind, any good system, including The Chuck Norris System, will lose its understanding and collective memory of the concepts and principles that make it uniquely effective.

It falls to master instructors to maintain a high level of *theoretical and practical knowledge* and application for *all* our techniques, so that important elements are not collectively forgotten in the system. Change, evolution, adaptation, and application built upon a foundation of sound principles is *innovation*. Change and evolution resulting from failure to understand sound principles and adopting a path of least resistance is *erosion*. It is our responsibility as master instructors to foster innovation, and prevent erosion.

General Kicking Philosophy

In kicking, as with all other aspects of CNS, we have to identify the situations we are trying to address with our technique. The situation will determine the approach to the technique, and each martial arts style has preferences for which kinds of situations it will address best in the overall technical context of all its combined techniques.

Kicks are often more difficult to define than upper body techniques, in terms of finite technical concepts and details. Sometimes it's even a tough sell. The reason? Legs are more massive and inherently stronger than arms, and they are power sources in and of themselves. Because of this, we can believe we are delivering technically clean, powerful, and efficient techniques, when really we are simply benefitting from the large mass and strength of our kicking leg. Our goal in *MDS 601* is to make us even more efficient than our legs can be by virtue of their relative size and strength alone.

There are many, many kicking styles and applications. Our goal is to deliver the best kick we can for the situation at hand. We need therefore to be familiar with, and train, as many options as possible, so that we have as many instinctive options as possible available to us at application time. With that said, CNS does have certain *default* kicking executions for our various kicks. These tend to complement the rest of the technical foundation of the style more completely than another selection of defaults would. It is important to know our defaults AND our options. We test our defaults; we pull from our options to apply whatever is called for in a particular situation.

MDS 501 focused on upper body techniques in the context of the eight components. *MDS 502* focused primarily on thrusting front kick, side kick, and back kick. MDS 601 focuses on round, heel, and the crescent kicks.

The official Chuck Norris System black belt testing curriculum includes certain default thrusting deliveries for round kick, heel kick, and inside and outside crescent kicks. There are, however, a variety of deliveries for each of these kicks which we should be proficient with. How a kick gets to its ending position defines its usefulness inany given situation, and is far more important than the ending position itself.

In CNS we train kicks from fighting stance by default. Of course, they can be delivered from other positions, as well. (Note about the fighting stance guard: lead hand and elbow should protect centerline. Turn both hands sideways to facilitate wrist parries.)

Round Kick

Round kicks take many forms. A few of them will be mentioned in class. It would serve us well to be acquainted with as many of them as possible. The default CNS round kick is designed to be a speed kick more than a high-damage, power kick, but by applying all eight components of quality technique, we can assure that it is both quick *and* powerful.

Primary striking points for the round kick:

- instep
- ball of foot
- shin

The instep delivery is perhaps the least complicated of these, and may be a good one to start with for beginners. The ball-of-foot delivery (which appears in UFAF 1) engages other complications which may inhibit a beginner's ability to pick up the principles of the kick. However, by 1st degree black belt, students should be proficient with both instep and ball-of-foot deliveries.

With just a little imagination, a round kick can be looked at as a snapping front kick turned on its side. The upper leg points through the knee *directly at* the target (hip→knee→target), and the knee acts as a stationary pivot point for the lower leg/foot to slingshot around, directly into the side of the target. An example of one of the several alternate methods of delivering the kick (not the CNS default, but still very effective for many applications) is to point the knee *past* the target, again using the knee as a stationary pivot point which the lower leg/foot slingshots around, impacting more toward the *front* of the target, rather than the side. (The farther past the target the knee points to begin with, the shorter the range of the kick, and the more toward the front of the target the impact will take place.) These alternate deliveries or variations are not bad kicks! They are certainly not "wrong." They have their place in many applications, as determined by desired angle of impact, distance to the target, and usefulness of the fold as defensive protection, to name just a few considerations. But the CNS *default* round kick chambers with the upper leg pointing through the knee directly toward the target, and strikes directly from the side as the foot slingshots around a stationary knee to impact.

The CNS default round kick is designed to create maximum velocity (for a snapping kick) of the striking weapon into the target from the direct side angle. Anything less than maximum falls short of the goal. Some of the alternate round kick deliveries described in this section are excellent kicks for other applications, but they do not create the maximum possible impact velocity for the weapon. In order to achieve this, only one chamber alignment will do - i.e., the hip and knee in direct alignment with the target. We will discuss this in detail below.

4-count Round Kick

When we teach a round kick to a beginning student, we often identify a progression of four fundamental delivery positions (together referred to as a "4-count kick").

1. Fold
2. Extension and Release
3. Recoil
4. Set down

With time and practice, these four discrete positions will eventually trace the kick's most efficient and smooth line of power, and tap into its most effective power sources.

It is entirely appropriate and necessary to teach beginning students the round kick using this 4-count model. Considerable time should be allowed for beginning round kickers to thoroughly internalize these concepts - usually into the intermediate ranks. They need time to develop the required posture, isolate lines, and identify power sources. Only when they have a good idea of these elements, is it time to graduate to the more advanced 3-count version of the kick, discussed later in this section.

In our 4-count kick model, it is important that the fold have a few important qualities:

- post foot initially turned 90 degrees to the target
- good body posture - avoid scrunching the body forward at the waist or leaning excessively away from the target
- kicking knee points directly to the target: lead shoulder->hip-> knee->target all in a line
- kicking foot pulled comfortably toward buttocks
- where the kicking knee points determines the height of the kick (When pointed out parallel with the ground, the upper and lower leg - foot, hip, and knee - are on the same horizontal plane. Hinging at the hip, that flat plane is raised or lowered according to where the knee points.)
- ankle of the kicking foot is positioned to kick with the desired striking point (extended for instep, flexed for ball of foot, etc.)

Instructor Tip

The knee is key in a round kick fold, and in the execution of the kick itself. Be specific in your instructions to students about where it points and how to get it there. For example, rather than simply saying "point the knee to the target," be more specific. Ask, and help them answer, questions such as these:

- Do the upper and lower leg form an "arrow" pointing through the knee to the target? Or does only the upper leg point - through the knee - toward the target?
- Does it matter if the knee is pointing a little past the target? If so, why?
- What muscles are used to elevate the knee and rotate the hip into the fold position?
- What muscles are used to extend the kick?
- Why must the folded foot be as high as the hip, and not hanging down?

Students need answers to these and other questions before they can attach value to the effort you are requiring of them to fold and execute the round kick correctly. Without these specifics, they may think that what they are doing is "close enough," and never go to the effort to develop an awareness of what "right" is, or even the necessary physical ability (functional strength and flexibility, joint integrity, explosive speed, etc.) to do it correctly and safely.

The Knee

We have made a point of the folded knee pointing directly *at* the target for our default round kick. As previously hinted (in the above reference to the knee pointing past the target in some applications), there are valid round kick applications which call for variations on this general principle. Master instructors should strive to be able to identify these different kick deliveries, associate appropriate applications, and help students execute and practice them properly.

An obvious problem arises when students who are not aware of the differences in these applications try to execute the default CNS round kick, but from a fold position which does not support it (most commonly, knee pointing past the target). Still trying to make contact directly on the side of the target, the student finds that the knee must track backward during extension to achieve the appropriate alignment at impact. The result of the backward-tracking knee during extension is that power is robbed from the kick. It's like throwing an object forward from a backward-moving platform. The actual target impact velocity of the weapon is significantly lessened.

Students often fold the round kick with the knee pointing past the target because they tend to bring the leg into the folded position by activating the hip flexor muscles instead of hip abductors and muscles of the low back, which are typically less used in everyday life and tend therefore to not be as trained as hip flexors in most people. Often, people simply aren't used to using these other muscles for much of anything, and so they default to the muscles they more commonly use. Flexibility in this position may also be a limiting factor.

***Position* Karate vs. *Doing* Karate**

If we're not careful, the myriad small details about a technique can sometimes take on more importance than they are due - literally becoming the technique itself in students' minds. In reality, such details are, of course, only *elements* of a technique, not the technique itself.

For example, instructors sometimes identify the ending position of a student's technique as "correct" or "incorrect" without identifying *how s/he arrived at the position*. The student may assume that if the ending position is right, the technique must have been executed correctly. We must take care to avoid this trap, and to neither push nor pull our students into it.

Principle: *Execution is priority; position happens. The converse is not true.*

If the knee points shy of the target, problems ranging from less power to knee injury (hyperextension) can result.

When the knee points directly at the target of the kick, and is held stationary during extension, the speed of the weapon is maximized.

Active-flexibility, slow kicks with proper posture and fold will help identify all the necessary flexibility and musculature, and develop the neural pathway program (a.k.a. muscle memory) to execute the kick at higher speed, and will make it clear which muscles need to be conditioned to do so. Subsequent training for fully functional flexibility and strength will unlock the mechanics of the round kick.

The Foot

The foot folds at hip height and is pulled comfortably back to the buttocks. When the foot hangs down below a flexed or externally rotated hip in the fold position, an upward-angled impact will result at extension. Angled impacts tend to glance, and do not deliver as much force directly into the target. (Think of trying to break down a concrete wall with a sledge hammer. Would you strike with an up- or downward angle to cause the most damage? Or straight in?) Of course, there are situations that call for angled attacks. But our default is the straight-in impact, accomplished by folding the foot on the same level as the hip.

Two main reasons to chamber the round kick as it has been described here:

1. Maximum energy transfer into the target directly from the side
2. Maximum reach (range)

These reasons become even more clear when we transition into the 3-count kick model.

The 4-count version of the default CNS *spinning* round kick should fold by bringing the rear knee through as though for a rear-leg snapping front kick, and then as soon as the rear knee clears the front knee, the hip rotates the folded foot up into the fold position described earlier. This contrasts to the early-folding spinning round kick used in some styles (rear knee comes up immediately from the floor and travels in a circular motion around to the front and the target), which is a much more powerful kick, but slower, and with a different objective. We should practice this kick, too!

Power Sources

The primary power source for a 4-count round kick is the contraction of the quadriceps, which extends the lower leg about a stationary knee into the release position. The knee is protected from hyperextension by the hamstrings, as they snap the forward-moving kick off sharply, and return the leg to the folded position. While not a major source of power in the 4-count kick, the torso *stabilizes* the entire kicking action from the footwork leading into the fold, to the fold itself, to the kick, to the recoil, to returning the foot to the ground, and supports the required posture.

In addition to teaching the correct technique, instructors should help their students develop the strength and stability to maintain a strong posture to shoot forward from, rather than developing a tendency to lean the upper body back excessively to counterbalance the extended leg. Correct posture is very important to one's ability to load and deliver the round kick correctly!

In the 4-count delivery there is little, if any, momentum from the folding/loading action because the separation of fold and extension in the delivery sequence forces a stop or brief hesitation between the completed fold and extension. This will change with the transition to the 3-count execution model, where momentum becomes an extremely important factor.

The release of power take place at impact, and is facilitated by a snappy recoil.

A snappy round kick recoil is important for the following reasons:

- release the power of the kick
- load for another possible kick
- avoid being trapped
- reset body posture to controlled balance, enabling follow-up techniques to be executed most effectively

After recoiling to the original fold position, the hip rotates the leg down as the kicking foot reaches for the floor, placing the body in a position of controlled balance and posture for the next movement or technique.

3-count Round Kick

Beyond the inherent power in the leg itself, power in the round kick comes from the speed and momentum of entry through an efficient line of power. This speed and momentum becomes most evident as one makes the transition to the 3-count round kick.

The 3-count kick (which blends fold and extension into a single count) recruits not only knee extension for snap, but also lead-in speed from the kicking foot's explosive takeoff from the floor (activated by the hip abductors and low back muscles - as well as hip flexors and hip rotation for rear leg round kicks). This explosive and dynamic takeoff helps the knee "fly" or float up in line with the target, and replaces the more muscularly active and slower "lifting" of the knee that the 4-count model requires. The line of power that was identified in the 4-count kick is not ignored or forgotten, but is simply traced more smoothly in the 3-count version of the kick. Stopping or hesitating at the fold position is eliminated. When the knee "flies up" into alignment with the target and stops suddenly, energy is transferred to the lower leg/foot, and is then power-boosted with the contraction of the quadriceps. If the knee is still moving when this transfer takes place, energy will be absorbed in the moving upper leg, rather than being transferred efficiently into the lower leg. This is an important application of the principle of *kinematic sequencing*, where energy is sequentially transferred (rather than forced or pushed) from body segment to body segment across stable and mobile joints, from ground to target.

Much practice is required to ensure that students are patient to wait until the moment the knee aligns with the target before kicking (an example of *timing* in action). A difficulty many experience is activating the kick extension too early, while the knee is still moving into alignment with the target - sometimes all the way from the floor. This is a natural reflex employed to try to get the kick higher by generating mid-kick momentum. It is far better to activate the kick just as the knee comes into alignment with the target. This is a much faster kick, and requires less muscular effort. Instructors need to develop an eye for identifying whether kick extension is starting early, before the knee is pointing at the target. Help students to think more about directing the knee than kicking, and then simply let the kick throw itself to the target - low, high, or anywhere in between. If they use momentum and functional flexibility to let the knee "fly" into position (instead of muscle and active flexibility to "lift" it), every student will be able to kick higher than before, and many students will be surprised (sometimes stunned!) at how high they can kick!

Here's another reason to time kick extension with knee/target alignment. If the leg begins extending too early, the body will be forced to time the kinematic sequence so that the kick does not reach full extension before reaching target height, which means a braking action is automatically being

applied to kick extension while the knee elevates. Slower extension means less power. If we wait to kick until the folded knee is aligned with the target, the kick will be much faster. Faster extension means more power. (Power is a measure of energy released over time. If *x* amount of energy is released over a given period of time, and the same *x* amount of energy is released again in a shorter period of time, the second release will have more power.)

This principle applies to *every* technique - blocks, strikes, kicks, arm bars, chokes, etc. "Position, position, position!" Let the body get into the correct position to launch the technique before doing so.

The default CNS *spinning* round kick has the advantage of, and indeed relies on, speed of entry. It is executed by bringing the rear knee through as though for a snapping front kick, and then as soon as it clears the front knee, the hip rotates the folded foot up to the kick plane as the knee continues directly forward toward the target and then extends into release - no stops or hesitations from ground to target in this explosive 3-count model. This contrasts to the early-folding spinning round kick used in some styles (rear knee comes up immediately from the floor and travels in a circular motion around to the front and the target), which is a much more powerful kick, but with a slower entry, a different objective. We should practice it, too!

The torso (or core) is the *stabilizer* for the release of round kick power, rather than a major power source (except for rear-leg kicks where torso rotation during delivery can have a significant effect on power). The torso's ability to find and hold posture as the knee suddenly stops and transfers energy from upper to lower leg is the foundation of an explosive round kick.

3-count round kick proficiency should be the goal for 1st degree black belt candidates. If a student continues with 4-count execution into the advanced student ranks, s/he may never learn to recruit *functional (dynamic) flexibility* for execution. Target choices will therefore be limited to what s/he can do with *active (muscular) flexibility* only. By hesitating at the fold position before snapping the kick out, more muscle is used for a longer time, which shades the kick toward active flexibility recruitment only. Exploding from the ground into the kick and letting the knee fly up into alignment with the target before extension allows one to fully utilize functional flexibility.

Footwork Teaching Order

Learning the round kick in standing, slide-up, and spinning variations (in that order) is a good strategy. The extended ranges (lunging, slide-up lunging, shuffle-up, skipping) and footwork combinations can be added later - at least by 2nd degree (when the extended ranges are required for testing), if not sooner in the intermediate to advanced student ranks.

To learn a round kick initially, start from standing balance - feet in 'L' position (heels together - front foot facing front, rear foot facing directly to the side) and hips at a 45 degree angle - rather than complicating the issue with sliding to and finding balance before kicking, or initiating from a fighting stance or back stance. As comfort with the kick increases, start allowing the supporting foot to turn (heel to target) and the hip to reach more, which will increase momentum, snap, and range. Hip position (from 45 to 90 to extended 90) has a major influence on the range of the kick.

Instructor Tip
A useful drill for helping students learn the *spinning* round kick footwork is to have them launch to the fold position without kicking. Have them think of reaching/shooting/gliding forward and bumping or punching an opponent in the solar plexus with the knee, concentrating on correct alignment and momentum. (If kicking to the head, let the knee glide toward the face.) When gliding forward, think of opening the body up through the middle as both hips allow lateral - outward - rotation of the legs. As students develop more proficiency, they will notice their supporting foot turning - heel to the target - and being dragged forward by the momentum of the kick. (Though appearing similar to a skipping round kick to the untrained eye, it is only momentum that pulls the support foot toward the target in the spinning kick, and not the actual propulsion provided by the skipping footwork.) After several successful repetitions, the kick extension can be added to the end of the glide, paying special attention to how much momentum is generated and transferred to the kicking leg.

This same drill can also be used with any other round kick footwork, and is particularly useful for the skipping footwork.

A useful visualization for the spinning and skipping deliveries is to stay upright and *let* the rotation do the kick. Create the energy that will be channeled to the kick by spinning the hips and legs, not by moving forward with the upper body.

> The kick is the byproduct of guiding the energy in the right direction, through the right sequence, along the right line. Said another way, 'When the knee arrives, the kick will come.'

Applying the Eight Components of Quality Technique

You will recall from *MDS 501 & 502* and from your everyday training, that we commonly speak of eight components to a quality technique:

1. Posture
2. Line of Power
3. Methods of Generating Power
4. Footwork
5. Timing
6. Kinetic Sequencing
7. Focus
8. Mental/Emotional Spark

A master CNS instructor should be able to rattle these terms off without even thinking AND be able to describe the meaning of each, and how it interrelates with the others. When we attach "why's" to each of these components, they will have real value in our minds, and in the minds of our students, and the terminology will be much easier to remember, understand, and apply.

The components are usually presented in a useful teaching order, but are actually fully integrated at execution time - at least in a mature martial artist. For the beginner, the *least* important of the first three components in the list is #3 - generating power. Power in the system, before posture and lines are defined, will be power the student cannot control. For this reason, it is best to avoid telling beginners that they need to have more power. If they seek to generate power before having the technique to control it, it will damage their ability to develop the control for greater power in the future.

Our discussion of the round kick includes all eight components: From a strong posture, we create power by changing from a 4-count to a 3-count kick and using momentum in the entry to the kick. We guide the kick along an efficient line of power, and coordinate the power source and the line together with timing and kinetic sequencing to release the power into the target. The entire technique is ignited by an instantaneous mental and emotional spark of full-body activation and commitment to inflict damage.

Any adjustment in posture will have an effect on power sources and ranges for the round kick. The most important martial arts position for a beginner to learn is the ready stance, because it will establish the posture of the back and the entire upper body for the ability to deliver and execute technique from every stance. As experience is gained, formal stances give way to a combination of posture and footwork, but what we learn from formal stances about posture and the key power delivery positions is never forgotten.

The ability to generate power is impeded by poor posture at the beginning of a technique, and the ability to release it is impeded by poor posture at the end. (In the latter, you are *bound* or *tied* to the power you've generated - often pulling you off balance - which sets you up to be taken advantage of by a knowledgeable opponent.) When techniques end in bad posture, you are at the end of the road of possibilities, but when they end in good posture, you are in position to continue with other techniques, should the first one not be successful.

Physical Conditioning Unleashes Technique

Consider an example of how physical conditioning can unlock the power of correct technique: Sometimes students will begin leaning in a particular direction to accommodate an anticipated movement - a fold for a kick, for example. Instead of folding from a position of good posture (which requires the development of functional strength and flexibility to do), they will lean out of balance prior to folding, in anticipation of the ending position of the kick. The "fix," of course, is to become aware of, or be taught, the proper way to fold correctly. But sometimes even more important is the physical conditioning *necessary* to fold correctly. Certain kick folds recruit muscles that students may not be accustomed to using. Retraining these muscles cannot be accomplished in the course of a single karate class. Despite being aware of the correct way to execute some techniques, it may require weeks, months, or even years of committed effort to develop the strength and flexibility to perform them correctly. This is one reason many students never quite seem to "get it" when it comes to some techniques. Conditioning to facilitate correct technique requires attention and consistent effort, and will certainly require maintenance after reaching one's goals.

Experience and Technical Progression

In *MDS 501*, we agreed that there is no such thing as white, orange, or green belt technique, but only black belt technique. However, there is white, orange, and green belt *execution*. On a purely physical level, execution of technique is a function of 1) technical understanding and application of the eight components, and 2) physical conditioning. A martial arts student (which each of us is) will experience increasingly proficient levels of execution throughout his/her career, as s/he continues to learn, apply, condition, and develop mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually.

A technique which is "correctly executed" at blue belt level may very well be incorrect for a black belt. Black belts, who should have developed a higher level of technical understanding and physical ability, will take the technique to a new and higher level.

This progression is important, and should not be short-circuited. Beginners need to concentrate on beginning material to build awareness of the fundamental concepts of execution. Gold belts, as a general rule, simply cannot execute at the same level as black belts, because they don't have the ability to do it. This ability needs to be developed over time with committed effort and patience on the part of both instructor and student.

In summary, there is only black belt technique, but we patiently utilize various levels of execution - from beginning to intermediate to advanced to black belt to highly proficient black belt - to help our students along the path to internalizing the necessary elements of quality technique, and to executing them at black belt level.

Snapping Heel Kick

As with all kicks, it seems, there are many different variations on the heel kick. Different martial arts styles rely on different variations. There are powerful, straight-leg, circular "wheel" kicks; hooking kicks; and the CNS snapping heel kick, to name three. The straight-leg form of the kick has tremendous power, and would be the weapon of choice where maximum impact force is required and where time is not of the essence. The CNS snapping heel kick evolved from this straight-leg, power heel kick, and is a speed kick, much like a jab is a speed technique for the upper body. The snapping heel kick is the CNS default heel kick. As always, it is desirable to be acquainted with all possibilities, but our discussion here will focus on the snapping heel kick.

The snapping heel kick does not have the mass or the lateral velocity to do significant damage to the body. It is most effective when delivered to the head. When practicing, do it low to warm up, and then work it upward. As with the round kick, active (muscular) flexibility usually won't be enough to deliver this kick to head height, as it should be delivered. We need to employ dynamic, functional flexibility to do so.

Since the heel kick is normally taught a little later in a student's progression, we can perhaps spend less time on the 4-count description of events, and concentrate more on the 3-count version of the kick. Of course, the heel kick can be executed on four counts, just like all the other kicks. But it becomes so disjointed that it barely resembles a heel kick at all. Use the 4-count model to teach lines and power sources, and then rely on students' knowledge of other 3-count kicks to build their understanding of the heel kick on. It is particularly helpful to be thoroughly familiar with the 3-count side kick, both for similarities and for differences.

The heel kick is often described as "shooting out like a side kick that misses" and "recoiling like a round kick." These are useful visualizations, so long as

they are interpreted correctly. In essence, a heel kick does indeed "shoot out like a side kick that misses" the target by a narrow margin (no more than shoulder width), and then "bounces" through the target while still extended and before "recoiling like a round kick." Let's examine each of these steps in more detail.

To teach the heel kick to someone for the first time, it is useful to have them begin in the slide-up side kick position which they are probably already familiar with. (Both feet facing sideways at 90 degrees to the target with an upright body posture.) Other initial stances and footwork can be introduced later. From this basic position the standing and slide-up heel kicks are most easily taught and learned.

The first step in delivering a heel kick is to look at the target with both eyes. This is very important, because this head position will turn the shoulders into the correct alignment for the kick. Where the head goes, the shoulders follow. For a heel kick, the front shoulder must remain directed toward the target, and not be allowed to turn inward during execution (turning one's back toward the target) - a natural reaction that must be resisted. Turning the head completely toward the target and seeing it with both eyes will keep the torso and shoulders in the correct position to execute the kick. As we shall see, this will become most important when it is time for the heel of the extended leg to "bounce" across and through the target.

With both feet sideways and looking at the target with both eyes, bring the kicking foot up HIGH, and shoot it out like a side kick just wide of the target. "Miss" the target by sending *only the leg and foot* in the slightly wrong direction, and NOT by turning the feet, hips, and shoulders to align with the false target. Keep feet, hips, shoulders, and both eyes aligned with the actual target. The heel kick entry differs from an actual side kick in another important way: the hip does not roll over at the end of the kick extension. It stays sideways instead.

It's now time to allow the extended leg and foot to "bounce" through the target, striking with the back of the heel. By shooting the leg out toward an off-target point as described above, the body will automatically want to recover its natural sideways alignment. For this reason, the heel's "bounce" through the target will happen by itself. The bounce is also closely tied to the two-eye contact principle described earlier (both eyes directed toward the target). Eye contact keeps the front shoulder aligned with the target, which encourages the leg and foot to bounce through the target. We might even say that it is the eye contact (with both eyes) that will bring the heel through the target. This is a useful visualization for students. The result is a controlled bounce of the extended leg and foot through the target.

Another great visualization is throwing a ball on a string. Imagine standing a few feet from a wall, and throwing the ball almost parallel to the wall, so that it bounces off the side wall just as the string (leg) reaches its full length. The bounce causes the ball to travel sideways away from the wall, its forward progress having been stopped by the string. In the heel kick, that bounce off the side wall is caused by speed of entry coupled with the two-eye contact and front shoulder position.

A common problem is the tendency to *hook* or *recoil through* the target. This happens either because of a misunderstanding of the mechanics of the kick, or as an attempt to make up for power lost in a slow entry into the kick. Simply stated, the recoil of the heel kick is not the kick! Recoiling through the target creates a hooking effect where the heel strikes the target with the kicking knee bent. This decreases the range of the kick, and changes the angle of impact. In reality, the recoil is the follow through that happens *after* the *extended* leg has already bounced through the target. (Note: The hooking delivery of the kick is actually very useful, but for a different application which we may explore in class.)

Another common problem is "peaking," "looping," or "lifting" the kick through the target, as opposed to kicking as horizontally as possible through it. We can correct this by developing more speed into the entry. The faster the no-hip-side-kick entry "shoots" out, the flatter the kick will be through the target. Of course, the foot must also shoot out to the correct height to begin with.

Encourage students to just "let the bounce happen." If they "think" snapping heel kick, then they will likely short-circuit everything, and the kick will hook. But if they look at the target with both eyes and shoot the foot just wide of it, the extension and bounce will happen automatically. Be precise about this and check to see that students are looking and shooting in the right direction. If they look at the shoot point, they will tend to hook into the target. If they look at the target, the kick will be more likely to bounce through it all by itself.

Initially, teach the kick with the supporting foot sideways. With time students can progress to snapping the supporting-foot heel toward the target, reaching toward the target with the hips opening, allowing both legs to turn outward. This reaching action will likely generate a little supporting foot drag, even on a standing or slide-up heel kick. This is perfectly acceptable. Shoot the foot out with momentum - utilizing glutes and hamstrings to extend the hip, and quadriceps to extend the knee. There is no need to lock the kick out or flex the quads at extension to protect the knee from hyperextension, as with the thrusting front kick. Just shoot it out and let it bounce through the target. The knee is protected from hyperextension by the hamstrings which

stop the thrust and recoil the kick after contact. This is similar to how the biceps protects the elbow from hyperextension on a ridge hand technique.

Spinning Heel Kick

The CNS spinning heel kick is a snapping kick, and not a big, circular spinning kick. The most important part of the lead-in to it is to quickly turn and find the target with both eyes. The head spins first, followed by the shoulders, thus creating a coiling action in the torso. Without any pause or delay (which would break the rotational kinetic sequence), the torso then uncoils bringing the hips and kicking leg through last. This action, as well as the line of the kick, can be taught in pieces to identify the components, but must finally be executed as a dynamically coordinated, sequenced coiling and uncoiling action through the torso from shoulders to hips and out through the leg. All of which enables the body to generate significant momentum on the leg into the kick entry. Momentum is very important in this kick (as opposed to "muscling" the kick) in order to generate the desired direction, speed, power, height, reach, and snap.

Spinning heel kick drill progression (described for left leg kicking):

- from *left* leg forward, sideways standing position:
  - execute left standing heel kick
- from *left* leg forward, sideways standing position:
  - cross left foot over right foot
  - execute left standing heel kick from crossover position
- from *right* leg forward, fighting stance:
  - keep both feet in place
  - turn completely around to the left until both eyes find the target and shoulders are sideways to it, let legs twist
  - execute left standing heel kick from this twisted pretzel stance
- from *right* leg forward, fighting stance:
  - spin and kick with left leg in one fluid motion

Repeat for right leg by switching lefts and rights in the preceding

An erect body posture through the spin is important. Sometimes kickers bend over too much and too early while spinning because they are anticipating the impending muscular action of "lifting" the kick into position. Instead, maintain an erect body posture during the spin, relying on activation and momentum to shoot the kick out along the correct line.

Avoid over-rotating the shoulders and hips before kicking. The head spins to find the target and then stops. The shoulders spin until they are sideways to the target and then stop. As the hips begin to square up with the shoulders

(where they will also stop), the kick is activated so that at the moment of extension into impact, both eyes are on the target, shoulders and hips are square with each other and sideways to the target, and the leg is extended along the correct line for a heel kick. If the shoulders and hips rotate too far toward the target before kicking, none of the actions required for the delivery of the kick can take place. To use momentum, the body must be in correct alignment. Everything has to come together for momentum to let the kick "fly out" along an efficient line. (For a ball to roll smoothly through a pipe, the pipe must be free of sharp bends, corners, ups, and downs. For a yo-yo to work smoothly, the string must not be twisted, tangled, knotted, or wound up too tight so that it binds up. These examples have their likeness in an inappropriately executed spinning heel kick.)

Inside Crescent Kick

Our treatment of the inside crescent kick will borrow much from the other circular kicks we have discussed. The CNS inside crescent shoots out like a snapping front kick that misses the target by a narrow margin to the side, and then "bounces" across and impacts on the side of the target with the arch or "palm" of the foot.

Explode the foot off the ground with the calf and hip flexor muscles, leading with the knee (like the start of a snapping front kick). When the knee reaches alignment with target height, it stops suddenly and transfers its energy to the lower leg as the foot flies/snaps out and up to target height. As the foot snaps out, reach with the hip. The hip does not push, but is instead pulled by the leg. Relax the hip and allow the reach to happen. The kick will get its lateral striking power from how quickly the foot explodes off the ground, up and forward, and not by how hard it is "pulled" laterally through the target. Concentrate on speed of entry, not lateral pull.

Take the leg through the target *extended* - not recoiled or recoiling. Keep it in the extended, reaching position all the way through the target area. In fact, the more extension, the more bounce there will be through the target. Seek to avoid "peaking" the kick. (The kick needs to travel as horizontally as possible through the target area.) Tip: Faster entry speed will minimize peaking.

Now let's back up and examine another aspect of the kick delivery. If you watch closely, you will notice an interesting reaction in your shoulders when your leg shoots out to kick. As an experiment, relax your shoulders and entire upper body. From this relaxed state, shoot your leg forward to kick. You will notice that as your leg shoots forward, your kicking-side shoulder responds by moving backward to balance the movement. It's similar to what naturally happens when you walk or run: your arms swing opposite of your legs. But if this action is allowed to happen in the execution of an inside

crescent kick, the kick will have no power (because the backward shoulder rotation will be pulling away from the direction of the kick).

For an effective inside crescent, you must resist this natural reaction. Stabilize your shoulders so that when you shoot your leg forward, it will be propelled against the support of stable shoulders. This will increase the explosive speed of entry into the kick. Keeping your shoulders stable will also aid the "bounce-through" action of the kick into the target. We will examine this phenomenon in detail in class.

To maximize the power of the inside crescent kick, emphasize the velocity of the foot and knee shooting up and out to full extension against the support of stable shoulders. The impact force of the kick is a byproduct of the speed of entry and the resulting extension. Tip: You can and should maintain a relaxed and erect upper body posture even while holding your shoulders stable.

Standing Inside Crescent (front leg kicking)
If eye contact and shoulder position "bounce" a heel kick through its target, what bounces an inside crescent kick through its target? It is the same concept, but with the body facing forward instead of sideways. Facing the target in fighting stance, establish flat-faced, two-eye contact on, or just through, the target. Stabilize the shoulders and shoot the front knee and foot out toward a point just to the side of the target (no more than shoulder width away). Keep the hips in fighting stance alignment toward the target and send only the kicking knee and foot in that direction. At extension the body will seek to bring the kicking leg back into front kick alignment with the hips, which will automatically "bounce" the crescent kick through the target.

Step-through and Rear Leg Standing Inside Crescents
The bounce-through action of the step-through and rear leg standing deliveries of the inside crescent kick is assisted and made easier by the sequenced turning action of the torso (shoulders then hips) as the rear knee and foot shoot forward to kick.

Jump-spinning Inside Crescent
In the jump-spinning delivery of the inside crescent (the "butterfly kick") it's important to extend forward with the hip and kicking leg, and not short-circuit the kick. Spin then extend and reach forward, rather than spinning without reaching. This will give the kick the flexibility of being an explosive offensive weapon, rather than a short-range, defensive technique.

Inside Crescent Summary
Once again, we must move beyond beginner-ish principles of execution (lift/fold, kick, recoil, set down - each a muscular action) to realize the full potential of this kick. Speed of entry, efficient lines, and application of

timing, sequencing, and the mechanics of body alignment will give this kick more pop!

Outside Crescent Kick

Our discussion of the outside crescent will be the shortest yet, because it borrows so much from the principles we have discussed relative to the other circular kicks.

Similar to the inside crescent, the outside crescent also starts by explosively shooting the knee up and forward, letting it fly into alignment with target height, but slightly wide of the target itself. The foot follows the knee and snaps out into extension, similar to a snapping front kick. Reach out with the hip. This will make a difference in the velocity of entry. Your mindset is important. If you are thinking about stopping the extension, it will impede speed; if you are thinking about extending, it will increase speed. Eye contact on, or even through, the target will help bounce the kick through the target. These are the same principles we applied to the heel kick (but from an upright, forward-facing posture) and to the inside crescent kick (but in the opposite direction).

The striking point on the foot for the outside crescent is the outside of the foot, with the foot in a bladed position (inverted ankle position).

The shoulders play a role in the outside crescent kick. Recall that with the *inside* crescent, discussed previously, the natural reaction of the kicking side shoulder when the leg shoots out is to rotate away from the direction of the kick. The very same reaction takes place when the leg shoots out for an *outside* crescent. But this time the rotation is in the same direction as the kick, which supplies an extra power boost. It's like a kind of unconscious torque, and it is unnecessary to resist it, as in the inside crescent. Just let it happen.

Knowing this about the action of the shoulders, it is tempting to make the shoulders the focus of our attention in trying to generate more power. But you will find that consciously *trying* to torque the shoulders will actually interrupt the timing of the kick and slow the leg down as it shoots out. It is better to focus on the explosive entry of the knee and foot, and just "let shoulders happen."

Maintain an upright posture. If the body is scrunched over, the knee can't shoot where it needs to go. Scrunching will also inhibit shoulder rotation. You end up getting in the way of the kick, or getting in your own way.

Spinning Outside Crescent

With the weight entirely on the front leg for balance, spin farther than for a spinning heel kick until the chest is actually facing the target. Find the target

with both eyes and activate the kick as the shoulders are squaring up to the front. (The hips are still trailing behind.)

The kick is activated with the same "shooting" action where the knee shoots up and out into alignment with target height. The foot follows the knee, much like a snapping front kick.

Reach with the hip to increase the speed of entry, the extension of the leg, and the power of the kick. Let the foot travel sideways through the target with the leg extended. Recoil only after the foot clears the target.

An upright and relaxed posture is necessary to a balanced spin and to allow room for the knee to come up. The key to the spin is to look first and then spin the leading shoulder all the way around. This action coils the torso and prepares it to deliver the kicking leg. (Top-down torque, instead of bottom-up, as in punching, for example.) The arms may be used to assist the spin.

This is one of CNS's most aggressive and powerful kicks. Use all the momentum that can be built into the spin, last-instant explosive entry, and extension of the kick. Allow the knee to lead the way, and the hip to extend through the target.

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